

### Christmas 2023

An eventful year is drawing to a close and we can look back on many fruitful and intensive months of work with children and young people. In kindergarten, school and our training workshops, there have been many wonderful stories about children who have developed, parents who have gained hope and are now working with us and also new motivated team members who have made a significant contribution to both the quality and quantity of our work.

We are grateful for many guests in our Lifegate Garden guest house, which was well booked until September and we were also looking forward to a well-filled fall. We have fond memories of the many groups of visitors who got to know us, often had lunch and spent time with us. Many became our friends and supporters in Germany.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our loyal supporters in Germany who work in the Lifegate-Tor zum Leben association, in workshop sales, in translating our publications into English, in organizations, foundations and at the German government (representative office) and the many people who have privately, within their circle of family and friends, participated in various activities for Lifegate. Thanks to your support, we have been able to give many children and young people with various disabilities a new perspective on life.

When we returned on October 6 with our young people from a week-long holiday at the Sea of Galilee, which we organized together with friends from Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles, none of us could have imagined that one night later we would wake up to a world that was about to change completely.

The terrible events of October 7 in southern Israel, which resulted in the death of 1400 people and the deportation of 250 babies, children, young and old people to Gaza, led to a war that is not limited to the Gaza Strip, but also affects the north (Hezbollah, Iranian militias in Syria) and the south of Israel (Houthi militias in Yemen) and may spread even further.

As a result, our foreign volunteers left the country, all bookings in the guest house were canceled and there were many restrictions on what we could do in the service area. With God's help, we quickly found our way back to a good work-routine in all areas of support and were able to provide stability for our children, parents and, above all, the team. This is particularly important as many spouses or close relatives of many Lifegate employees lost their jobs in Israel or in the tourism industry in Bethlehem.

We are particularly pleased about the many messages and signs of solidarity we have received from home and abroad since the beginning of the conflict. People who express their concern, who encourage us and pray for us, people who plan and implement campaigns for our work and help us to remain financially stable. **Yes, we have many good friends in times of need! Thank you very much!**

People from many Israeli institutions, with whom we have been working for years, also contact us and ask us about our well-being. These are long-standing relationships, based on respect, understanding and friendship, which do not break down even in difficult times!

At Lifegate, we are now able to provide many people who have fallen into poverty due to the war situation with healthy bread from our bakery and a warm meal from our kitchen every day, thanks to support granted specifically for this campaign. We can help others to get winter clothes for their children and buy basic foodstuffs for Christmas and beyond. In total, we want to reach over 15,000 people during the next three months with this basic aid. A second project phase may follow if good opportunities present themselves in the Gaza Strip.

When Jesus was born in a poor stable in Bethlehem, the world in this country was not in a good state either. Infanticide, flight to Egypt, the iron hand of the Romans in the land. And the witnesses to the birth were shepherds, simple people who lived outside with the animals. This is how small, naked and bare we all came into the world and this is how we will go again; we can take nothing with us. In between, however, we are allowed to shape this world, to look away from ourselves as people accepted and loved by God and to look at other people instead of saying "mine" - "ours". Instead of accumulating, we share, create, build and encourage people. Jesus gave us an example in his life on earth and HE gave us the support and source of strength to follow in HIS footsteps!

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior", who also wants to heal so many sad and broken hearts in our country and all over the world.

Let us share this good news in deed and word!

With heartfelt thanks for all your support in 2023, we wish you a joyful and blessed Christmas and God's blessing and assistance for 2024. Keep us in your prayers, in your support and thoughts!

With kind regards

Yours, Burghard Schunkert and the Lifegate team

